



No Shining Armor: The Marines at War in Vietnam: An Oral History

Otto J. Lehrack

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"No more Vietnams!"

A quarter century after the war in Vietnam, that battle cry brought a flag-waving nation to its feet and ignited the superpatriotism of the Gulf War era. But hard as we tried with yellow ribbons and "We Support Our Troops" bumper stickers and Norman Schwarzkopf videos and Olympics-style homecoming celebrations we couldn't seem to erase the disturbing memory of Vietnam.

Perhaps forgetting is not the answer. Perhaps the healing process begins with remembering. Painful, clear-headed remembering.

Even those who remember best, the men who fought in Vietnam, aren't anxious to recall their experiences or recount them to an academician. But in Otto Lehrack they found a sympathetic audience. Lehrack is both a historian and a member of the Third Battalion, Third Marines. He fought alongside the men whose voices he recorded here. Into their accounts, Lehrack has woven a narrative that explains the events they describe and places them into both a historical and a political context.

It's a grunt's-eye view of the Vietnam War that emerges in *No Shining Armor* the war as seen by the PFC's, sergeants, and platoon leaders in the rivers and jungles and trenches. It's the story of teenagers leading squads of men into the jungle on night missions, the story of boredom, confusion, and equipment shortages, of friends suddenly blown away, of disappointing homecomings. It's also the story of young men placed under unbearable strain and asked to do the impossible, who somehow stretched to meet the demands placed upon them, and the story of the friendships they forged in combat friendships deeper than any these men would be able to form later in civilian life.

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